

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

To place the subject application in better form, a new abstract is presented in accordance with preferred practice. No new matter has been added.

Claims 23-27 are presented for consideration in lieu of claims 14-22, which have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 23 is the sole independent claim. Support for these claims can be found in the original application, as filed. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Applicants respectfully traverse the restriction requirement set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

In the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that the subject application contains two separate inventions. As asserted by the Examiner, Group I, claims 14-18, 20 and 21, is directed to a substrate processing system, and is classified in class 118, subclass 719, and Group II, claims 19 and 22, is directed to a device manufacturing method, and is classified in class 430. Claims 14-22 having been canceled, the restriction requirement has become moot and should be withdrawn. Applicants reserve the right to file a divisional application directed to the subject matter of these claims.

Nevertheless, Applicants confirm the provisional election, with traverse, to prosecute the invention of Group I.

As discussed above, claims 23-27 are now presented in lieu of claims 14-22, which have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer.

Applicants also request favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

Claims 14-18, 20 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Specifically, the Examiner asserted that there was insufficient antecedent basis for the recitation of “a gas supply mechanism which supplied *the* first gas and *the* second gas to the load-lock chamber.” Claims 14-18, 20 and 21 having been canceled, this rejection has become moot and should be withdrawn. Nevertheless, the Examiner’s comments were taken into consideration when presenting new claims 23-27.

Turning now to the art rejections, claims 14 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,455,082 to Saito et al. Claims 15, 16 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Saito et al. patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,792,378 to Rose et al. Claim 18 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Saito et al. patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,981,399 to Kawamura et al. Claim 21 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Saito et al. patent in view of the Rose et al. patent and the Kawamura et al. patent. Applicants submit that the cited art, whether taken individually or in combination, does not teach many features of the present invention, as previously recited in claims 14-22. Therefore, these rejections are respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, Applicants submit that independent claim 23, for example, as presented, amplifies the distinction between the present invention and the cited art.

Independent claim 23 recites an exposure apparatus for exposing a wafer to light via a mask. The apparatus includes a process chamber in which the wafer is exposed to the light, a

load-lock chamber connected to the process chamber via a gate valve, a transfer mechanism to transfer the wafer from another apparatus different from the exposure apparatus into the load-lock chamber, a booth which is connected to the load-lock chamber via a gate valve and covers the transfer mechanism, and a gas flow forming mechanism which includes a filter and causes gas through the filter to flow through the booth.

Applicants submit that the cited art, whether taken individually or in combination, does not teach or suggest such features of the present invention, as recited in independent claim 23.

The Saito et al. patent shows a reduced pressure processing system that includes a load-lock chamber having an opening communicating with a process atmosphere in which a wafer is processed and/or the outer air atmosphere, a gate valve which is arranged at the opening to open/close the chamber with respect to the process atmosphere and/or the outer atmosphere, a robot for loading/unloading the wafer into/from the chamber, an evacuation pump for evacuating the chamber, a heater for heating the wall of the chamber, and a controller for controlling the gate valve, the robot, the evacuation pump, and the heater.

The Rose et al. patent shows a chemical vapor transport reactor gas dispersion disc for counteracting vapor pressure gradients to provide a uniform deposition of material films on a semiconductor slice. The disc has a number of apertures arranged so as to increase in aperture per unit of disc area when extending from the center of the disc to its outer peripheral edge.

The Kawamura et al. patent shows a semiconductor device fabrication apparatus having multiple processing chambers for different processes. A substrate is carried in and out of a chamber, with their different internal ambient conditions being retained. The apparatus includes a movable buffer chamber having a wafer carriage within a transfer chamber which faces a

process chamber, an evacuation device which evacuates gas in the buffer chamber, the transfer chamber and the process chamber independently. The apparatus also includes a gas feed and a controller.

Applicants submit, however, that none of the art cited art, whether taken individually or in combination, teaches salient features of Applicants' present invention, as recited in independent claim 23, including the arrangement of the process chamber, the load-lock chamber, the transfer mechanism, the booth and the gas flow forming mechanism. In particular, that art is silent at least with respect to a booth which is connected to the recited load-lock chamber via a gate valve and covers the transfer mechanism, and the gas flow forming mechanism which includes a filter and causes gas through the filter to flow through the booth. Accordingly, the cited art does not teach or suggest many features of the present invention, as recited in independent claim 23.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that the present invention, as recited in independent claim 23, is patentably defined over the cited art, whether that art is taken individually or in combination.

Dependent claims 24-27 also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in independent claim 23. Further individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicants further submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010 All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address given below.

Respectfully submitted,



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